compensatory afforestation on equivalent non-forest land has also been relaxed in respect of proposals involving construction of link roads, small water works, minor irrigation works, school building, dispensaries, hospitals, tiny rural industrial sheds of the Government which directly benefit the people of the area, provided diversion of forest area does not exceed 20ha. wherein the compensatory afforestation can be done over the degraded forest land. For speedy clearance of projects under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, the powers have also been delegated to the Regional Offices of the Ministry. The Regional Chief Conservator of Forests is competent to finally dispose off the proposals involving diversion of forest land upto 5 ha. except in respect of proposals for reguiarisation of encroachment and mining. The powers have also been delegated to the RCCF for proposals involving forest area above 5 ha. and upto 20 ha. for examination in consultation with state Advisory Group and such proposals alongwith views of the Advisory Group recorded by RCCF are sent to the Ministry for final decision only.

The Chief Minister is being informed accordingly.

Making Dwelling Unit a Fundamental Right

1356. SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Chairman, National Human Rights Commission, while addressing a function in New Delhi on the World Habitat Day on October 7, 1996, had said that the right to own a decent dwelling should be made a fundamental right; and

(b) if so, what is Government's response thereto, indicating the estimated number of dwelling units required in urban and rural areas to provide a dwelling unit to each family, without an abode?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT AND MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. U. VENKATESWARLU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government is committed to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to adequate standard of living, through a number of concrete measures outlined in the National Housing Policy. Estimates made by the National Building Organisation (NBO) based on 1991 Census data reveal a housing shortage of 21.56 million dwelling units as of 1.3.96, comprising 7.71 million units in urban areas and 13.85 million in ruial areas.

Encouraging the use of Solar Energy

1357. SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether any concrete steps have been taken to encourage the use of solar energy in some of States and Union Territories;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise and Union Territory-wise;

(c) whether Government have launched any programmes to encourage popularisation of solar energy system; and

(d) if so, the details thereof, alongwith their results, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF POWER & MINISTRY OF NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI): (a) to (d) The Government is encouraging the use of solar energy through socially oriented and market oriented schemes covering solar photovoltaic and solar thermal energy products in all the States and Union Territories. The subsidies and soft loans